

# ABSTRACT

The present invention relates to selective anxiolytic therapeutic agents which allow for the treatment of anxiety-related disorders with less severe side-effects, such as sedative and amnesic effects, and in particular, dependence liability. These selective agents selectively or preferentially bind the  $\alpha 2$ -GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor, as compared to the  $\alpha 1$ -GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor. Alternatively, these selective agents selectively or preferentially activate the  $\alpha 2$ -GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor, as compared to the  $\alpha 1$ -GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor. The present invention also relates to methods for identifying such selective anxiolytic therapeutic agents. The present invention also relates to methods for identifying a molecule that decreases binding of a benzodiazepine to the  $\alpha 1$ -GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor, but not substantially to the  $\alpha 2$ -GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor.

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